

REFLECTIONS on THEO WALKER

4 and a half weeks - that's how long our son Theo got to make an impression on the world... not long.... not long enough. However I know that the depth of the impression he has made on us is not measured in days or weeks.

Lucy has the perfect analogy for what 2009 has been like for us... it's been our own private boxing match. A bout in which we unfortunately have played the part of the punchbag.

The start of the year was an anxious period. Akin to the time when a promoter tries to fix that much desired fight. At times it felt like we would never get there, but then suddenly Lucy was pregnant! The Fight was on!

There is the thrill of adrenaline (or morning sickness) that is the first 12-weeks.... and now we are stepping into the ring... however as the bell rings for the 20-week scan, we are hit with a huge body punch.

Gone are the dreams & expectations of that perfect healthy child that everyone thinks is theirs by right. Instead your baby has a heart condition. A heart condition that the surgeons can help with, but ultimately will mean a very different life from the one you always dreamed of.

After some time in the corner, summoning up all the inner resolve we can manage, we tell ourselves that this little person is worth fighting for... he deserves his chance.

The numerous rounds of additional scans pass – some routinely, some uncovering further complications – each taken on the chin.

Then Theo gets his chance to punch back for us – he's born – no complications, no intervention and that little heart stays steady and strong all the way. I have never felt pride like it - in mum & son.

However whilst our guard is down the sucker punch lands. Those operations we thought would help put you right Theo, they can't be done.

We're staggering now. Then comes the knock-out blow. We knew it would come, but we could not prepare. Too few cuddles, too little time, Theo has gone and we are down & out for the count.

However we will get off the canvas in 2010, because of Theo, and because of all things he has given us:

He gave us.... 4 and a half weeks, when the doctors said he would have hours without the ventilator.

He gave us... the chance to meet his numerous girlfriends – all the nurses and carers who loved to pick him and give him a cuddle. These people at The Royal Brompton Hospital and the London Palliative Care team are the most incredible caring people I have ever met – they are people who truly inspire me and I thank each of them who have come today.

He gave us... time at home instead of hospital... with no drugs and no dramas right to the very end.

He gave us... Sunday lunches, evening dinners and trips to pubs with friends.

He gave us... unbridled happiness and true contentment.

He gave his dad the joy of seeing him dressed in a Welsh shirt and us sat on the sofa watching the cricket together.

But most of all he gave his mum the most wonderful cuddles in the world and proved to her that she could be an incredible mother.

All those priceless gifts given and all those indelible impressions made in 4 and half weeks of life.

I think that is a life well spent and a boxing match I am glad we had.

Theo – thank you for choosing us.

We love you and we will celebrate you forever.

30th Dec 2009